



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
EXECUTIVE OFFICE
LANSING

BRIAN CALLEY
LT. GOVERNOR

CONTACTS:

[Sara Wurfel](#) or [Dave Murray](#)
517-335-6397

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, Oct. 19, 2015

Gov. Rick Snyder: Academic, financial challenges in Detroit's public schools require a new approach

Legislative plans will focus on ensuring families have quality school choices

LANSING, Mich. – Gov. Rick Snyder today discussed a legislative package focused on reversing longstanding problems faced by public schools in Detroit and giving families more quality educational options.

The historic academic and financial struggles faced by public schools in the city will require a new approach, developed in collaboration with city and state elected and community leaders to create the brightest future possible for all of Detroit's children, Snyder said.

"There is no question that Detroit children need a solid education so they can compete in a global economy but also for their city to accelerate its revitalization," Snyder said. "This is an opportunity to recast a structure that isn't meeting the needs of the city's families for a variety of reasons. Starting with a plan presented by community leaders, we have crafted a new approach that will give families quality public school options while stabilizing district finances."

Snyder said solid public schools are essential for the city's revitalization to spread from downtown to the neighborhoods, and all of Michigan benefits from a thriving, vibrant Detroit.

Enrollment losses, low levels of student achievement, and rising debt show that dramatic structural changes are needed. On an exam given to students nationwide -- the National Assessment of Educational Progress -- Detroit students rank last in performance of all U.S. cities.

Detroit Public Schools enrollment has dropped by nearly 100,000 students in the past decade, which greatly contributes to the district accumulating more than \$500 million in operating debt. That figure, combined with borrowing for buildings, puts the district at risk of collapsing financially. Such a collapse would greatly affect all Michigan school districts as the state is constitutionally responsible to cover many debts and liabilities, a figure that could be billions of dollars.

The legislation, to be introduced this month, builds upon recommendations from a broad group of community leaders and educators including the Coalition for the Future of Detroit Schoolchildren and input from Mayor Mike Duggan.

The proposal works toward a system that is financially sound while offering Detroit parents access to quality schools regardless of the type of public school they want their children to attend.

The legislative package includes:

- Creating a new, traditional public school district -- the Detroit Community School District -- to teach students, with the current Detroit Public Schools district existing only to address the debt. All students, employees, contracts, employee benefits, and assets will move to the new district, which will be governed by a seven-member board initially appointed by the Governor and the Detroit mayor, switching to elected members. An all-elected board would be in place by 2021.
- Creating a Detroit Education Commission, appointed by the mayor and governor, which engages with the community and hires a chief education officer.
- Driving academic achievement and increasing access to quality schools by allowing the chief education officer to, with community input, hold low-performing schools accountable and reward and increase the number of high-performing schools.
- Calling for the chief education officer to operate a common enrollment system with common forms, enrollment periods and notification dates that will help parents identify and evaluate their school options and choose schools that best fit their children's needs.
- Partnering with the city's current Financial Review Commission to oversee finances until the debt is repaid in full.

The proposal would require additional state assistance to ensure the existing debt can be paid off while ensuring that the district is fully funded. Currently, debt payments take \$1,100 per pupil out of the classroom. The state's investment will help avert a collapse that could cost significantly more for decades and will keep school doors open for 47,000 students along with setting in place a plan to boost student achievement and ensure access to a quality education.

Snyder said the package isn't a quick fix, but offers Detroit students better opportunities to get the quality education they need for a lifetime of learning and success, and that he looks forward to continuing work on these bills with the legislature.

###